

# **The Purpose of Baptism**

## **Acts 19:1-5**

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### **Introduction:**

- I. Acts 19 provides us with a basic fact regarding baptism. As Paul talked with the 12 who had been baptized there were a number of troubling comments made. Finally Paul simply asked, "Into what then were you baptized?" (V. 3).
  1. The Apostle was very concerned about the reason why these 12 had been immersed. What was the real purpose of their baptism?
  2. Just being baptized was not sufficient. Paul wanted these to know that baptism was only effective in removing sins IF one fully understood the purpose of the action.
- II. The passage shows us that God is very concerned about people understanding the purpose for which they are being baptized.
  1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – The Scriptures have been given to provide us with the necessary instruction for salvation. Every point, word, example, and command is important!
  2. In our modern religious world there are many who fail to understand that it is a critical fact that one understands why he is being baptized! Just getting "dunked" does not satisfy God's commands – the 12 from Ephesus illustrates this point. Look at some simple facts that are discovered from these 12.
  3. If it was imperative that these 12 understand why they were baptized, then it is imperative today.
  4. If the first baptism of these 12 was not acceptable to God, then there are baptisms that are not acceptable to God today.
  5. If these 12 could be sincere in their religious profession but wrong in their first baptism, then we must understand that there are those in our day who are sincere in religious profession but have been baptized wrong and need to be baptized according to the New Testament.
  6. If these 12 could not be taught wrong and baptized right, then people today cannot be taught wrong and baptized right. This means there are

those who have been baptized, are sincere, but are still disobeying God.

7. It is a troubling thought that we may be in error because we do not fully understand the will of God regarding the purpose of baptism. It is thus important that we study this topic.

**Body:**

**I. The Great Divide** – Sin separates man from God (Isaiah 59:2).

A. When sin entered the world it formed a barrier between man and God.

This barrier prevented man from:

1. Having fellowship with God because sin put man "without" the Garden of Eden where fellowship was found. Man thus was "outside" of the environment essential to salvation!
2. Having cooperation with God because sin placed man in conflict with God – man thus became an "enemy" to God. Man's identity was drastically changed in regard to God.
3. Having a submissiveness toward God because sin caused man to place Self as the guide of his thoughts and actions. Man thus changed his "will" so that he became stubborn and unyielding to God's commands.

B. When baptism is discussed it is instantly associated with the plan of salvation. Every time baptism is mentioned in cases of conversion it is associated with salvation (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20; etc.).

C. Baptism has been designed by God to be the action that removed sin and its consequences and that would restore man. According to God's design, baptism will:

1. Restore fellowship because man is placed "into" Christ (the Lord's Body; Church). And this is the only environment where fellowship with God is possible (Ephesians 2:11-14; Galatians 3:27-28).
2. Change man from an enemy to a beloved child (Colossians 1:21; John 3:3-5; Galatians 4:6-7).
3. Demonstrate humility and compliance to the will of God. By this action one demonstrates that self has been "crucified" and in the place of stubborn resistance one has surrendered and complied (John 7:17; Acts 9:4; 22:7-10; 26:14).

**II. The Gracious Deliverance** – Sacrifice is instituted

The purpose of baptism cannot be understood without understanding the principle of sacrifice in the Bible.

- A. The sacrificial system was instituted because of sin.
  - 1. Sin entered and separated man from God and thus deprived man of life (Ephesians 2:1-4).
  - 2. God designed the sacrificial system to "restore" life to man. This system required an offering of blood because "life" is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11).
  - 3. The shedding of the sacrificial victim's blood was to portray the giving of one life to redeem another life (Leviticus 4:13-20).
- B. The sacrificial system performed by the Levitical priests was imperfect and only portrayed the requirement of "life for life" in atoning sin's destruction (Hebrews 9:9-10).

The perfect sacrifice was offered by the Lord (John 1:29). The sacrifice of Christ would redeem the soul (Hebrews 9:13-15).

The shedding of Christ's blood was essential for man's redemption (Hebrews 9:22). Christ's blood was of eternal value and thus would redeem with eternal consequences (1 Peter 1:18-22).

When the blood of the sacrificial victim was "applied" then redemption was made (Leviticus 4:16-18). The OT sacrificial system was designed for instruction in one simple fact: No contact with the blood meant no redemption – one must contact the blood in order to be redeemed!

- III. **The Grand Deliverance** – Salvation is offered (sins can be "washed away"). The coming of Christ was for the purpose of man's redemption (John 1:29). Christ was sacrificed and died in order that man could be redeemed from sin (Isaiah 53:4-6). Christ hung upon the cross as the perfect sacrificial victim for mankind. On that dark day, the blood of the Son of God was offered as the eternal atoning price for man's sins (John 19:33-34).

Following the sacrifice on Calvary the message resounded throughout the world that salvation was possible; redemption had been paid! (Luke 24:47). How was repentance and remission of sins to be accomplished? The Scriptures do not leave us without an answer.

The Grand Deliverance is clearly described in Scripture (Revelation 7:14; 21:27)

The sin offering of the "lamb" was the type for the sin offering of Christ Jesus (John 1:29). The prophet foresaw the atonement of Christ typified in the slaying of the innocent lamb (Isaiah 53:1-7). With these points fixed in the reader's minds they would easily recognize that only through the sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ could one find salvation.

The Book of Revelation stresses that only by being washed in the Lamb's blood can one's garments become white and salvation be found (21:27). The "washing" of sins is a point of contention in the religious world.

1. At what point of faith does one contact the blood of Christ?
2. The Scriptures are not silent on this point. The blood of Christ was shed in His death. Only as the believer imitates the death of Christ can contact with the blood be found. This is fully discussed in Romans 6:1-11.
3. The contention comes to focus upon a specific query: "When does the believer die?" The answer is clearly stated. The revelation of Romans 6 deals with this question.
  - a. The believer "dies" and is "buried" and is then "raised" to walk in a "new life" (Ro 6:6, 11, 13).
  - b. According to Romans 6 this death and resurrection to a "new life" comes when the believer obeys God's command of immersion (6:3-4).
  - c. Thus, the blood of Christ is contacted when one is immersed and by that act of obedient faith one's sins are washed away because contact with the Lamb's blood results in forgiveness!
  - d. This conclusion is validated by the Scripture in Acts 2:38; 22:16.

**IV. The Glorious Destiny** – Sanctification (baptized "into" Christ's Body/Church – no other way to get "into").

The sacrifice of Christ completely reversed the curses of the sin that

entered into Eden! Unless one is baptized according to the biblical purpose these wonderful blessings are not possessed (this is why the 12 at Ephesus had to be baptized for the right purpose!).

- A. Fellowship was restored because man could be placed "into" Christ (the Lord's Body; Church). And this is the only environment where fellowship with God is possible (Ephesians 2:11-14; Galatians 3:27-28).
- B. Man ceased being an enemy and became a beloved child (Colossians 1:21; John 3:3-5; Galatians 4:6-7).
- C. Humility and compliance to the will of God was demonstrated (Galatians 2:20; John 7:17).
- D. **NOTE:** All of these blessings were connected with baptism! One **MUST** understand the purpose of baptism in order to seek the redemption and salvation offered by the sacrifice of Christ!

**Conclusion:**

- I. The topic of baptism is very clear in Scripture. It is sad that many want to blur the biblical doctrine. A greater tragedy is that once the biblical doctrine is blurred then the biblical purpose is not understood and the biblical design is not possible. One thus is "dunked" but such is not effective. Such would have to answer the Apostle's query– "Into what then were you baptized?"
- II. In summarizing the Bible's teaching on baptism we need to highlight some inescapable lessons that some today would rather evade:
  - 1. Baptism is God's design for salvation – without baptism one is without salvation b/c sins are not washed away!
  - 2. Baptism is God's **ONLY** design for salvation – there is no other way for one to be saved!
  - 3. Baptism is God specific plan for man – not a general baptism but a specific baptism! One **CAN** be baptized wrong and not be saved! The one being baptized **MUST** know what he is doing **IF** he is going to be baptized right. If one is taught wrong he will be baptized wrong! (Ac 19:1-12).

4. Baptism is God's method for placing one "in Christ" – only as one is baptized according to true teaching will one be baptized "into Christ" – "into what then were ye baptized" (Ac 19).

III. For one to teach that "any baptism is OK," teaches ...

1. God's specifics do not matter.
2. God's plan is not important.
3. God's commands are not authoritative.

IV. Consider seriously . . .

1. The question is not, "Is it OK to believe than 'any baptism' will save you?"
2. The question is not, "Why must we condemn those who are sincere in their religious faith?"
3. The question is, "Will we follow God's Truth or man's opinion?" (Ephesians 4:5; Mark 16:15-16). There is ONLY ONE acceptable baptism.

V. Here are facts that God wants mankind to understand.

1. The only way for one to find forgiveness is by the blood of Christ.
2. The only way to come into contact with the blood of Christ is by immersion (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).
3. The honest seeker of Truth will arise and be immersed so the blood of the Lamb can wash sins away! To preach remission of sins by any other method is to preach a perverted Gospel! (Revelation 22:18-19)